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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 10/26/09

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ARTICLES:

(1) Hatoyama emphasizes importance of U.S. to Japan

ASAHI (Page 1) (Excerpts)  
October 25, 2009

Haruko Kagenishi in Hua Hin (Thailand)

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama attended on Oct. 24 a summit meeting of Japan and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) where he said, "I have proposed the long-term concept of creating an East Asia Community." This is the first time Hatoyama briefed ASEAN leaders on the framework. He also clarified his position of seeking the involvement of the U.S. in the community framework.

Regarding the question of how Hatoyama's proposed community would handle the U.S., Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said: "The government is not considering the idea of including the U.S. in the community." Hatoyama, who has said, "Japan has no intention of excluding the U.S.," also said in a meeting with the Chinese and South Korean leaders on Oct. 10: "Japan has depended too much on the U.S."

Such remarks, in addition to the government's response to the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa, have made the U.S. distrustful of the Hatoyama administration. By emphasizing the importance of the U.S. for Japan, Hatoyama

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apparently tried to remove Washington's anxieties ahead of the planned first visit to Japan by U.S. President Barack Obama next month.

(2) PM Hatoyama torn between Japan-U.S. alliance and Asia-focused diplomacy at ASEAN+3 Summit

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
October 25, 2009

Osamu Sato in Hua Hin, central Thailand

Along with the leaders of China and the Republic of Korea (ROK), Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama participated in the ASEAN Summit, where he gave an explanation of his East Asian Community initiative and stated that the Japan-U.S. alliance is the linchpin of Japan's diplomacy. He endeavored to indicate his intention to balance Asia-focused diplomacy and Japan-U.S. cooperation. However, it is unclear how far he will be able to narrow the widening gap between Japan and the U.S. over such issues as the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa).

At the beginning of the meeting with the ASEAN leaders, Hatoyama emphasized Japan's position of giving importance to the Japan-U.S. alliance. He said: "We have achieved a change of administration. The administration's foreign policy is that the Japan-U.S. alliance is the linchpin of our foreign relations."

Hatoyama went on to say: "ASEAN plays an important role in East Asia. I would like to propose the long-term vision of an East Asian community and promote cooperation under the principle of open regional cooperation." His speech was unusual because he talked about the Japan-U.S. alliance with the full lineup of ASEAN leaders in front of him. The Prime Minister undoubtedly had his eyes set on the United States.

Hatoyama had elicited the U.S.'s displeasure with his statement at the Japan-China-ROK trilateral summit on Oct. 10 that "Japan had tended to depend too much on the U.S.; I would like to build a policy that gives more importance to Asia." With regard to the East Asian Community, certain government officials have said that the U.S. is not meant to be an official member of the community, thus arousing suspicions on the U.S. side.

During an informal meeting with reporters accompanying him to Thailand on Oct. 24, Hatoyama stated unequivocally that he has no intention of excluding the U.S. from the community. His emphasis on the importance his administration attaches to Japan-U.S. relations at the ASEAN+3 Summit was meant to send out the message to the U.S. that "emphasis on Asia does not mean taking the U.S. lightly."

Japan and China are already competing behind the scenes to grab the initiative in creating the framework of Asian relations. On the other hand, the ASEAN countries are wary of becoming the battlefield for a diplomatic war among Japan, the U.S., and China.

There were some positive comments about the East Asian community initiative at Hatoyama's meeting with ASEAN leaders. These comments included "Japan, China, the ROK, and ASEAN should form the core" and "We appreciate the revitalization of the discussions on East Asian cooperation." However, no questions were asked about the concrete plans for the community. The concept also did not come up at the

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Japan-India summit.

It is believed that since Japan's position on whether to prioritize Asia-focused diplomacy or the Japan-U.S. alliance remains unclear, Southeast Asia and India are still trying to gauge their optimum distance from the Hatoyama administration.

(3) Main points of statements by U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mullen

YOMIURI (Page 6) (Full)  
October 24, 2009

The following are the main points of statements made by U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Mike Mullen on the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station.

The Futenma relocation issue is closely linked to all elements included in the agreement, so (a solution of) the Futenma issue will open doors to all remaining U.S. force realignment issues. The realignment plan involves the two governments' budgetary measures. I understand the motives of (the Hatoyama administration's) examining (the contents of the agreement), but the government should make a decision as soon as possible. Secretary (of Defense) Gates has said: "I expect a solution will be brought about before President Obama visits Japan."

I consider that the agreement this time, specifically the relocation of the Futenma facility, is absolutely necessary for the entire U.S. force realignment package. From the viewpoint of the U.S. military, it is inconceivable that the U.S. can provide Japan and the region with security and defense support without this plan. Moving the Futenma facility (out of Okinawa) will inevitably reduce (the U.S.'s) security support to Japan and the region.

If there are many months or many years of delay, we might begin to doubt Japan's willingness to implement the accord itself. The Obama administration decided to support the agreement in a considerably short period of time after its inauguration. The government itself should decide what it wants to do, but Japan has been a partner (of the U.S.) for many years.

(4) U.S. military's top officer brushes off call for "no first use of nukes"

ASAHI (Page 4) (Abridged)  
October 24, 2009

Yoichi Kato, senior writer

Visiting U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Adm. Mullen met the press, including the Asahi Shimbun, yesterday at the U.S. Embassy in Akasaka, Tokyo. During the press conference, Mullen rejected Foreign Minister Okada's advocacy of "no preemptive use of nuclear weapons" as "unacceptable."

"We must be very cautious in a region where the threat (of nuclear weapons) is expanding," Mullen said. He explained that the security environment of Japan is worsening due to such issues as North Korea's development of nuclear weapons.

"Such a policy would extremely undermine our flexibility (regarding

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the U.S. nuclear umbrella)," Mullen said, adding: "If our flexibility rapidly deteriorates, the danger will reach a level that we think is unacceptable." Thus Mullen indicated that the United States will refuse to restrict the preemptive use of nuclear weapons.

(5) Foreign minister's statement on relocation of Futenma within prefecture sends shockwaves across Okinawa and local communities

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 3) (Full)  
October 24, 2009

Satoshi Hokama

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said on Oct. 23 that moving the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station out of Okinawa would be inconceivable, sending shockwaves to prefectoral officials concerned. Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima raised questions about consistency with the Hatoyama cabinet's tripartite agreement and about how decisions are made by the cabinet, saying, "What is the government going to do with its public pledge?" Senior prefectoral government officials also expressed perplexity. The governor has repeatedly urged the Hatoyama cabinet, which is advocating a review of the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan, to quickly come up with a concrete plan. The unexpected Okada statement is likely to press Gov. Nakaima to revamp his strategy.

Kadena integration option regarded as difficult

"Although (Foreign Minister Okada) said it was his personal view, I don't quite understand his decision," said a senior Okinawa official, who has indicated that he will closely watch the Prime Minister's policy speech to be delivered on Oct. 26. "It is not a matter on which anyone can comment casually." The official did not conceal his bewilderment.

The official also indicated that it would be difficult to find alternative sites in Okinawa, including the option of integrating Futenma with Kadena Air Base, saying, "The public, including the people of Okinawa, will not be convinced easily. The government might end up shifting the envisaged base from one location to another within the prefecture."

If Foreign Minister Okada's statement becomes the government's official policy, Gov. Nakaima, who has indicated that the relocation of Futenma to Henoko is a pragmatic option, will find himself in a difficult position. Nakaima has reiterated his previous position that although relocation out of Okinawa is the best option, relocation within the prefecture is inevitable. There have been calls from within the ruling parties for Nakaima to send a clear-cut message seeking to move Futenma out of the prefecture, saying that in mainland Japan, he has been reported as favoring relocation within the prefecture.

The prefectoral official, while pointing to the need to coordinate views with the governor, explained a plan to release a governor's statement indicating that he was exploring the best option of relocating Futenma outside the prefecture. But given Okada's Oct. 23 statement, even if Nakaima comes up with new policy, he is likely to come across as being one step behind the government. The prefectoral government might come under pressure to make a difficult decision on the Futenma issue.

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(6) Editorial: Government's intentions for relocating Futenma

facility still unclear

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)

October 23, 2009

U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates visited Japan and held meetings with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, and Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa. The focus of attention in these meetings was on the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture, as part of the planned realignment of U.S. forces in Japan.

Gates appears to be a person who prefers to push ahead with things in a businesslike manner. When a senior government official visits a foreign country, the host government customarily holds a ceremony to welcome him or her. But Gates reportedly has often declined such offers. In the series of meetings and a press conference in Japan, too, he made candid statements.

On the Futenma relocation issue, Gates emphasized that (1) The relocation of the Futenma air station to the coastal area of Camp Schwab in Nago City under the existing plan is the best option, and the Okinawa prefectural government's request for moving the site farther offshore is within the scope of things the U.S. can accept; (2) without the relocation of the air station, there would be neither the relocation of U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam nor the consolidation of U.S. forces in Okinawa; and (3) the existing plan should be implemented as soon as possible. With the conveying of these views by the U.S. government official responsible for the issue, the Futenma relocation can be said to have entered a new phase.

Although Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa called the remarks by Gates "a powerful message," the Japanese government has yet to make a clear reply. In the meetings, the Japanese officials only explained how the political situation in Okinawa has changed due to the change of government and the outcome of the latest general election. They also explained the government was examining the process that led to the adoption of the current plan. They probably wanted to relay its desire to have more time (to make a decision).

There are three options for the relocation of the Futenma air station: (1) Somewhere outside Okinawa Prefecture, or even outside the nation, as promised by the Democratic Party of Japan; (2) a site in Okinawa Prefecture other than the one in the existing plan, such as Kadena under a plan for integrating Futenma's functions into the air base; and (3) the site stipulated in the existing plan or the revision of the plan. If the government adopts the first option, negotiations with the U.S. government would be extremely difficult, and it would also become necessary to persuade local communities and residents to receive the facility. In the second case, as well it would also be difficult to acquire U.S. government acceptance and the agreement of local municipalities. In the third case, the DPJ would need to alter its conventional policy and persuade its junior coalition partner, the Social Democratic Party.

There are high hurdles to implementing any of the three options, but the longer the government delays a decision, the longer it postpones a solution to the problems of safety and noise that have distressed the residents of the densely populated area surrounding Futenma Air

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Station. Prime Minister Hatoyama has to make a final decision, based on the results of discussions in the government.

In a meeting with Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, Defense Secretary Gates urged Japan to make a policy decision by the time of U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to Japan on Nov. 12. On the timing for a policy decision, however, views in the government are divided. Defense Minister Kitazawa has indicated his eagerness to bring about an early solution, while Okada has called for a solution by the end of the year, keeping the compilation of the fiscal 2010 budget in mind. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Hatoyama once said that a settlement should be reached in the middle of next year.

Hatoyama seems to be hopeful of making a decision after looking at

the outcome of the Nago mayoral election in late January. But it is inconceivable that the outcome will lead to breaking the impasse in negotiations with the U.S. on the Futenma relocation issue. Okinawa Governor Hirokazu Nakaima has urged the government to swiftly determine its policy. The prime minister first should make efforts to unify views in the government on how and when the administration should decide on its policy.

(7) Host-nation-support outlays to U.S. military have become sacred realm: Estimated budget request same amount as one submitted by previous government

AKAHATA (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
October 24, 2009

It was learned by Oct. 23 that in the Defense Ministry's estimated requests (adopted on Oct. 15) for the military expenses (defense-related costs) for fiscal 2010, U.S. forces in Japan (USFJ) support costs (host-nation-support outlays) to pay for the costs of U.S. military bases' construction works and employees' salaries reached 191.9 billion yen (on an expenditure basis), which is exactly the same as the amount requested by the ministry during the previous Liberal Democratic Party and New Komeito coalition government.

Regarding expenses for the U.S. Forces Japan realignment, new project plans adopted by the previous administration have been incorporated in the Defense Ministry's requests as is. The estimated budget request for costs related to the Special Actions Committee on Okinawa (SACO) is also the same as the amount requested by the previous government. The total amount combining these amounts and the host-nation-support costs comes to 287 billion yen, which is almost the same as the 287.9 billion yen allocated for these items in the fiscal 2009 budget. This reveals that the new administration also regards host-nation-support outlays as a sacred realm.

The Defense Ministry acknowledged in the breakdown of costs for the U.S. Forces Japan realignment that a new project related to the transfer of U.S. Marines in Okinawa to Guam that will utilize private enterprises has been included. This project will involve the selection of private sector companies for the construction of about 3,500 houses for U.S. servicemen's families and the development of infrastructure, such as the building of a power supply system.

(Commentary) Even after the transfer of power from the LDP and New Komeito administration to the new Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration led by Yukio Hatoyama, estimated budget requests for military expenses have remained on the same level as that of the

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previous administration. In particular, expenses related to the U.S. military, such as host-nation-support outlays, are regarded as a sacred realm.

Japan is not obligated to pay those expenses in accordance with the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), too. However, no change is evident in the government's thinking on this subject. A certain senior Defense Ministry official said, "It is possible to cut the host-nation-support budget. However, there is a problem in doing so from the viewpoint of SACO."

Criticism of SACO grew among the citizens during Diet debate on the fifth extension of SACO in 2008. The DPJ also opposed such an extension.

As reasons for opposing the extension of SACO, the DPJ cited: (1) Japan's share in U.S. military-related expenses is significant compared with other countries; (2) the government is not fully monitoring the U.S. government's effort to cut expenses; and (3) the government cannot say what it needs to say to the U.S.

Upper House member Yukihisa Fujita at a joint session of both chambers of Diet on April 25 of the same year said, "It is not possible to gain the public's understanding for the government readily continuing to shoulder such a burden."

The present SACO expires on Nov. 3. Now that the DPJ is a ruling party, it should follow through with the stance it took when it opposed the SACO and end the host-nation-support outlays to the U.S. military.

(8) Japan pays 900 million yen annually for highway tolls for U.S. military, including leisure trips

AKAHATA (Page 15) (Full)  
October 24, 2009

Board of Audit calls for correction of practice

Through a Board of Audit survey, it became clear on Oct. 23 that the Defense Ministry has been paying out nearly 900 million yen a year in highway tolls incurred by U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) on "official duties" without examining the tolls. Japan has paid highway tolls incurred even by rental cars that are believed to have been used for visiting tourist spots for leisure. The Board of Audit has asked the ministry to correct the practice, saying it is inappropriate to treat all vehicles as military vehicles and not to verify whether they were really used for official duties.

Under the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement, U.S. military vehicles are exempt from paying highway tolls. The Japanese government pays tolls they incurred. Highway operators make claims for tolls based on USFJ-issued passes collected at toll booths. In fiscal 2008, the government paid some 860 million yen in tolls incurred by USFJ. Of that amount, 440 million yen was incurred by non-military vehicles.

The Board of Audit examined some 18,000 randomly selected passes (worth 21 million yen) issued to non-military vehicles. As a result, it found that some information was missing from about 1,500 passes (worth 1.89 million yen). In some cases, there were discrepancies between the destinations indicated in U.S. military registries and

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the route specified on the passes. The ministry did not investigate these discrepancies.

Passes are also issued to rental cars operated by welfare organizations on U.S. military bases, including Misawa Air Base (in Aomori Prefecture). The Board of Audit conducted an investigation based on vehicle registration numbers and found that 5,100 passes (worth 10 million yen) had been issued to rental cars.

Of that number, 2,000 passes were issued for Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. There was a case in which a car rented in Tokyo passed through toll booths in Kyoto, Osaka, Hyogo, and Nara over five days including a Saturday and Sunday. The Website of an organization officially authorized by Iwakuni Air Station (in Yamaguchi Prefecture) states that fees for rental cars include highway toll-free tickets good for all over Japan. Finding this Website, the Board of Audit questioned whether rental cars are used for official duties. The Defense Ministry has released a statement expressing its wishes to hold talks with the U.S. side on the appropriate use of vehicles.

(9) Keeping U.S. bases in Okinawa a crime

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 25) (Full)  
October 25, 2009

By Jiro Yamaguchi, professor at Hokkaido University

When Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada said that the government would give up the idea of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station out of Okinawa Prefecture, I happened to be in Okinawa. Local residents were greatly disappointed at the statement. If Japan cannot make good use of the change of government as a rare opportunity (to move the Futenma facility out of the prefecture), it means that reducing military bases in Okinawa will be impossible forever.

The government led by the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) has also

been bound by the spell of the myth of maintaining the Japan-U.S. relationship. Japanese national newspapers and TV have contributed to strengthening the spell's bind. No media outlet criticized the rude intimidation by U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

I would like to pose questions to those who say the Japan-U.S. security arrangements might collapse unless U.S. military bases remain in Okinawa. Have such people ever given a proper explanation of why Marines should stay in Okinawa and not on mainland Japan or Guam? I wonder if people who are making a fuss while referring to a possible collapse of the bilateral security arrangements understand what the collapse of the system specifically means. The U.S. military has been using the Kadena and Yokota air bases just as it pleases. I cannot understand why the transfer of Marines out of Okinawa would lead to a collapse of the security arrangement.

Allowing the Futenma airfield to remain in Okinawa is a crime against the local residents. Constructing a new base on reclaimed land in Henoko is a crime against future generations of Japanese. The DPJ government should make its utmost effort to implement its pledge to the people.

(10) "Kazamidori (Weathercock)" column: Ozawa-style Diet restructuring

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NIKKEI (Page 2) (Slightly abridged)  
October 25, 2009

Eiji Sakamoto, editorial staff member

The Diet building is certainly worthy of the name of a "white hall." It is now in the process of having its outer walls cleaned and its windows replaced for the first time since the building was constructed in 1936, and its original splendor will soon be restored. It would seem that the building's renewal coinciding with the historic change of administration is symbolic.

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa will move into an office on the second floor of the Diet building to coincide with the opening of the extraordinary Diet session on Oct. 126. His office looks out to the Diet's front yard and the administrative district of Kasumigaseki and is located in a very convenient prime spot. He will be making a triumphal return to the office that he occupied when he was Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) secretary general 18 years ago.

Ozawa, who is increasingly in the limelight as the key person in the Hatoyama administration, is focusing first on Diet reform. However, the reaction of other politicians to such things as the ban on the bureaucrats' responding to Diet interpellation varies greatly depending on where they stand in relation to the administration.

To cite an extreme example, a senior official of the LDP, which is taking a confrontational position as an opposition party, says: "This is meant to prevent us from asking the investigation authorities questions about the DPJ's scandals. There is no doubt about that."

The LDP intends to pursue the government relentlessly on Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's false reporting of individual political donations and Ozawa's involvement with the Nishimatsu Construction Company's donation scandal. The above observation is probably a bit far-fetched, but it is a fact that the opposition has so far adopted the strategy of exposing legal flaws through the questioning of neutral administrative bodies.

There is now a view in both the ruling and opposition parties that this is a step to lay the groundwork for politicians to exercise leadership in policymaking. "The real intent is to take back the power of authoritative interpretation of the Constitution and treaties from the bureaucrats."

Such authoritative interpretation amounts to the government's official position on legal interpretation and other such matters.

When Ozawa was LDP secretary general, he clashed head-on with the Cabinet Legislation Bureau's interpretation that there are "serious constitutional constraints" to the dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces for international contributions.

If the directors general of the Cabinet Legislation Bureau or the International Legal Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are banned from responding to Diet interpellation, Ozawa will be one step closer to realizing his longstanding assertion that "the politicians can take the responsibility to change the interpretation of the Constitution or the treaties if necessary."

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Ozawa himself gave the following explanation. In his speech before the students and company employees attending a class of the "Ozawa Ichiro Seiji Juku (Ichiro Ozawa's School of Politics)" in Tokyo on Oct. 21, he stated fervently: "Bureaucratic control should be eliminated from the Diet. So far, live coverage of Diet proceedings is done by NHK only because it is required to do it; nobody pays any attention. That is not right. The Diet should be made a venue for debating our ideals and policies."

Ozawa is also keen on "an uninterrupted Diet session throughout the year" and the abolition of the practice of designating only certain days of the week for conducting Diet business. These are reforms that he has already proposed in his book published in 1993 "Blueprint for a New Japan." He regards the Diet as an arena for debate between the opposition and the government. Ruling party Diet members are prohibited from submitting bills in principle, and Ozawa has indicated that he wants to reduce their opportunity to interpellate in Diet.

Junior LDP Diet members have recently been asking their DPJ colleagues sarcastically: "Isn't a dictatorship the purpose of excluding bureaucrats and ruling party members from the Diet?"

Distrust of Ozawa is not unrelated to his past behavior, often dubbed as "strong-armed," or his reputation as a "wrecker." On the other hand, Ozawa himself appears to be unconcerned by the disquiet in the ruling and opposition parties. He says enthusiastically: "There can be no progress if we only follow precedents." Will his reforms revitalize or hollow out the Diet?

The reason why there is a mixture of hope for his political ability to change the times and concern about his arbitrariness is based on past experience with the periods when Ozawa held the power. However, he would most probably say in retort: "People who criticize me always look at me through colored lenses."

(11) Poll: 53 PERCENT "didn't read a book for 1 month"

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Full)  
October 25, 2009

The Yomiuri Shimbun conducted a face-to-face nationwide public opinion survey on Oct. 10-11 about "reading." In the survey, 53 PERCENT of respondents answered "no" when asked if they had read a book during the past month. The figure is up 7 percentage points from last year's survey and the second highest percentage next to the previous record high of 54 PERCENT in 2002 since the survey started to ask this question in 1980. Among those aged 70 and over, "no" accounted for 70 PERCENT, up 9 points from last year's survey, and this figure reached a new high since this question started. The survey showed that senior citizens do not read books. The figure was followed by 48 PERCENT among those in their 50s, 43 PERCENT among those in their 40s, 45 PERCENT among those in their 30s, and 41 PERCENT among those in their 20s. There was an increase also in the proportion of those who do not read books among the younger generations.

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